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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [JA](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: ABE'S REPORT CARD: UNPRECEDENTED PROGRESS ON THE
SECURITY AND DEFENSE AGENDA

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Joseph R. Donovan, reasons
1.4 (b , d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Prime Minister Abe has had a string of legislative and policy successes on alliance issues -- including realignment, BMD data-sharing, and extensions of Japan's maritime support for Operation Enduring Freedom in the Indian Ocean and for coalition forces in Iraq. Complaints about Abe's leadership and negative comparisons with former PM Koizumi aside, Abe successes in passing legislation and implementing policies that strengthen Japan's security and defense posture are unprecedented. This cable is a quick summary of Abe's achievements. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) The weeks preceding Prime Minister Abe's visit to Washington and the May 1 "2 2" meeting of foreign and defense ministers have seen significant progress on Abe's legislative agenda and alliance issues. Abe's team has quickly husbanded bills through the Diet to fund the realignment of U.S. forces and extend Iraq and Indian Ocean Self-Defense Force (SDF) deployments. On the policy side, Abe has launched initiatives on collective self-defense, enhanced U.S.-Japan military cooperation, and BMD data-sharing. At the same time, significant steps have been made in joint training, building trilateral defense ties with Australia and the U.S., and preparation for the arrival of a U.S. nuclear-powered carrier.

Realignment: funding bill passes major hurdle

13. (C) The package of legislation to fund Japan's approximately \$20 billion share of the costs of the realignment of U.S. forces passed the Lower House of the Diet on April 13, and moved to the Upper House on April 26. The bill is on track for formal Diet approval within four to six weeks, according to MOD contacts.

JDA to MOD: Once impossible, easily done in 2007

14. (U) Abe's bill to upgrade the Japan Defense Agency to full Ministry of Defense status sailed through the Diet in January 2007 with minimal opposition.

Futenma replacement: Kyuma finally on message

15. (C) Defense Minister Kyuma, in a reversal of his previous

ambiguity on the issue, gave a clear message to Okinawa Governor Nakaima on April 24 that the bilaterally-agreed plan for the replacement of Marine Corps Station Futenma is "the best plan" and has full Japanese government backing. This marked a welcome change of tone for Kyuma, who in earlier press comments suggested that the U.S. show "flexibility" and not be "high-handed" in opposing changes to the agreed plan. Behind the scenes, Abe is reported to have been firm in directing that there would be no change to the 2 2 FRF plan.

¶6. (C) Direct orders from Prime Minister Abe led to another welcome change of tack: Japanese Coast Guard and police authorities on April 25 prevented Okinawan protestors from disrupting preliminary environmental surveys for the Futenma replacement facility (the Coast Guard and police had previously been loathe to restrain demonstrators).

OEJ refueling extended; Iraq airlift set for 2-yr extension

¶7. (SBU) On April 24, the Cabinet approved the latest six-month extension of the Maritime Self Defense Force (MSDF) refueling operations in the Indian Ocean in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. On the same day, the Lower House of the Diet began deliberations on a two-year extension of the law authorizing Japanese airlift operations in Iraq. MOFA and MOD contacts are optimistic the extension will be approved.

Collective Defense: Panel to recommend relaxing the ban

¶8. (C) Chief Cabinet Secretary Shiozaki announced April 25 plans for a blue-ribbon panel under the Prime Minister's Office to examine exceptions to Japan's current self-imposed

ban on collective self-defense. The panel is stacked with proponents of the U.S.-Japan alliance, and widely expected to conclude that Japanese forces should be permitted to intercept ballistic missiles fired at the U.S., and to defend friendly forces during coalition and peacekeeping operations.

BMD: MOD turns on BADGE air defense data 24/7

¶9. (S) On April 23, MOD began providing BADGE air defense data to U.S. forces on a 24/7 basis, in fulfillment of a pledge made in the wake of North Korea's missile launches last July.

PAC-3 missiles installed

¶10. (C) At the end of March, Japan installed its first PAC-3 interceptors at Iruma airbase outside of Tokyo, and the Cabinet approved emergency guidelines on the authority to intercept ballistic missiles in a surprise attack.

Joint Training: F-22s alongside Japanese fighters

¶11. (U) U.S. F-22 fighter aircraft temporarily deployed to Kadena airbase are in the midst of April 26-27 air-to-air combat training with Japan Air Self Defense Force F-15s and F-4s -- the first training by F-22s with any alliance partner.

Nuclear carrier arrival passes last political hurdle

¶12. (U) On April 26, Yokosuka Mayor Kabaya approved the dredging work required for basing the U.S.S. George Washington in Yokosuka, removing the last political hurdle before the ship's arrival in summer 2008. Earlier, a Yokohama District court dismissed a request to issue an injunction halting the dredging project. Dredging will begin this summer.

U.S.-Japan-Australia launch defense cooperation body

¶13. (C) On April 12, Japan hosted the inaugural session of a new Assistant Secretary-level body aimed at deepening defense and security ties between the U.S., Australia and Japan -- the trilateral Security and Defense Cooperation Forum (SDCF). All parties agreed to stage trilateral P-3 exercises, join a Pacific Fleet humanitarian deployment to Southeast Asia, hold seminars on HALE/UAV operations in the Pacific and improving airlift coordination, and endorsed trilateral discussions on ballistic missile defense.

¶14. (C) In another sign of growing maturity in Japan's defense ties with regional partners, Japanese naval vessels joined U.S. and Indian warships in an April 16 "goodwill" exercise in waters east of Tokyo.

¶15. (C) COMMENT: Abe's record on security issues is impressive. Skillfully using the Koizumi-created super-majority in the Lower House of the Diet, Abe and his LDP team have smoothly passed bills that would have been virtually impossible even 10 or 15 years ago, when the left could paralyze deliberations and effectively exert a minority veto. If Abe stays in office past the test of the July Upper House elections, he is laying the groundwork and developing the legislative momentum for even more significant changes, including intelligence reform and getting a new constitution.

END COMMENT.

DONOVAN